



The Insider

www.senate.michigan.gov/switalski

Inside State Politics with State Senator Mickey Switalski Senate District 10

November 13, 2009

Welcome to the electronic version of *The Insider*. I would like to take the opportunity to thank you for your support and giving me an opportunity to represent you in the Michigan Senate. It is my sincere hope that this bi-weekly e-newsletter will keep you informed of the happenings in Lansing while staying true to the traditional style of *The Insider*. If you would like to contact me, please feel free to e-mail me at senmswitalski@senate.michigan.gov or call me at my Roseville or Lansing office. You can also meet me in person during my constituent hours, coming to a location near you. Call my office and make an appointment or just walk in. See the schedule below for details.

Mickey's Blog: Leonard Haggerty 1920-2009

On Veterans' Day, it is fitting and proper that we honor the men and women who fought for our freedom. We remember and thank those who have served. Certainly among the finest of those worthy veterans is the late, great Leonard Haggerty, who died after a long struggle with cancer on October 26, 2009 after 89 years of living life to the max.

Leonard was a Veteran's Veteran. Blessed with the Irish gift of gab, he often downplayed his military record. He served in WWII as a combat infantryman in the U.S. Army in Germany. He was a member of General George Patton's personal bodyguard, and was in the detachment that liberated the Nazi death camp at Dachau. These experiences had a profound influence on Leonard.

From his home on Elizabeth Street in the "Grosse Pointe" of Roseville, Leonard entertained hundreds of local kids with his Excalibur car, his exciting political campaigns, and his unique "built-in" swimming pool. As he liked to point out years later to many of those swimmers, they often repaid his kindness by relieving themselves in his pool.

He set a record serving his community by holding office in six different decades, beginning as a village commissioner in Roseville in 1957. He was elected to the first Roseville City Council, and later served with distinction as Mayor. He returned with great fanfare to the Macomb County Commission in 1999. He assisted both young and old. At 84 years of age, he cleared an 83 year-old constituent's driveway of snow, and later won re-election against a 92-year old opponent with the slogan, "Vote for the Kid."

He had a knack for getting along with everyone, from conservatives like Leon Drolet, who praised him in the Macomb Daily, to liberals like Irene Kepler, who succeeded him on the County Board.

All who served with him knew him to be a gentleman and a friend, who got into politics for the noblest reasons and left with his honor intact.

Leonard always had a smile and a joke for everyone he met. He was compassionate, and he engendered that quality in those around him. At his wake, his son Jim told of his father's easy manner with a neighboring paraplegic. Leonard would go to his house in the evenings to help lift him from his wheelchair into bed, and when Jim was old enough, Leonard brought him along to help with the lifting. His daughter Shirley learned that same compassion and was there to help care for Len in his last months, a time she termed the luckiest part of her life.

He influenced generations of politicians in Macomb County, where he was known as the "Godfather" to many whose careers he helped with his campaigning skills and sage counsel. His wife Jan followed his tracks onto the Roseville City Council, and just as Leonard took a village to city hood, Jan was elected to the Charter Commission and led Macomb to an executive. Leonard's advice was both philosophical and practical. In one race, he teamed with another office-seeker to create joint signs. His ally was amazed by his ability to get permission to place the signs on practically every lawn on the main (highly visible) roads. How did he do this?

"I have never been refused," Leonard smiled, eyes twinkling.

Above all, he set an example for all on how to live a full life. As his youngest daughter, Kelly, related at his funeral mass, Leonard was a man of action. "He taught me 3 things," Kelly recalled.

1. Energy. Don't be a spectator in your own life. Get involved. Don't sit when you can stand, don't stand when you can walk, and don't walk when you can run.
2. Visualize. Always see the potential in things. Leonard would always say, "Don't look at it the way it is now. With a little spit, polish and paint, imagine what it can become." Put all your energy into making the dull and dusty things around us the best they can be. It's true of people, too.
3. Attitude. If you are positive about life, you've won half the battle. No one ever got anywhere by moping around and saying things are impossible. Enthusiasm is infectious and gets results.

Now *that* is a Philosophy of Life. Leonard's influence will long outlive his too short 89 years. His late wife Barbara and son Mickey are fondly remembered by many, and his wife Jan and children Jim, Shirley, Patty and Kelly and his 8 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren will ensure that Leonard continues to influence and help people for many years to come.

Thank you, Leonard Haggerty, for a life well-lived.

Mickey's Letter Bag: The QAAP Revisited

*In my e-newsletter last month (**What A Bunch of QAAP**, October 16, 2009), I discussed a proposal I introduced to tax doctors 3% and pay them back with higher Medicaid reimbursements. This Modest Proposal resulted in me getting a thousand e-mails, a march on Lansing by hundreds of doctors, and a spirited exchange of views in a Senate Committee Hearing. My proposal was defeated, but in my mind it was worth the effort. Here is the letter I sent to the doctors opposing me in the debate, along with a few of their responses. This is how government should work.*

Mickey

Dear Friend:

As you may know by now, the QAAP or 3% tax on physicians was defeated in the Senate on Wednesday, October 28, 2009 by a lopsided 4-32 vote. I was on the losing end of that vote, but I accept the result. With that, discussions on a Physician Tax will likely end for the foreseeable future.

I want to thank you and all the other people who emailed, wrote, or called me regarding the tax on physicians. I appreciate how many of you took time away from your work or home to share your thoughts on the merits of this legislation.

Most of you were strongly opposed to the tax.

That didn't bother me. I was just happy to talk to people who brought energy and passion to the question of how to fix our broken Medicaid system.

Sometimes our conversation began with a form letter. I admit to replying in kind.

But in a startling number of cases, that initial stating of positions evolved into a real conversation, a true exchange of ideas, which I found immensely gratifying. Many of you shared detailed information about your business and experience over many years with the Medicaid system. I learned a lot about the problem, and the proposed solution, that I did not know. The more I learned about the current system, the more I realized how much I didn't know or fully appreciate about the problem.

Certainly the tax had many flaws. The challenge of fixing those problems was immense. Besides the problems with guaranteeing the Medicare rate, redefining gross revenues, limiting liability, ensuring timely payments, and preserving the state's maintenance of effort, there were enormous issues of trust. But in almost every case I felt a willingness from even the toughest critic to consider the evidence and work toward improving patient care. For all our disagreements about tactics, I came to believe we all share that common goal.

Solutions to Medicaid problems will have to come from some other approach. At this time it is not clear what that path might be. But as long as problems persist, earnest people will seek to fix them. We should think of it as job security.

Thank you again for taking part in this debate. It has been one of the most important and interesting issues I have worked on in my time in the legislature.

Sincerely,
Michael Switalski
State Senator
10th District

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Here are some of the responses:

Thank you Senator.

I agree with your assessment. Though I disagree with you on the proposal, I have grown to respect your willingness to hear all sides on the issue. You are correct about the lack of trust for “the system” as state government, through its legislators, have systematically alienated physicians and de-motivated them to participate. We are open to many mechanisms to get people the care they need and most of us would gladly volunteer part of our time to do so. I hope you keep that in mind as more solutions are entertained. What is probably less negotiable is a tax that discriminates and is levied against one profession to solve a state wide collective problem (if one takes the ethical position that it is the state’s moral responsibility to provide health care for the poor).

Thank you again for your correspondence and your help in moderating a rigorous and fair debate.

Scott

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Well said. I too felt empowered and gratified with the healthy discussion. I’d like to work with you on future legislation.

Phil

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Dear Mr. Switalski,

I do appreciate your email and your apparent concern for the State’s health delivery problems. I do agree that there is probably a way to improve on the problems if good, thoughtful people come together to come up with solutions. These solutions should be fair to all involved. There are many of us who would help brainstorm ideas if asked. Good luck in your job of managing this fine state of ours.

Sincerely

Henry

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Hi...

Glad it didn’t pass. I may have lost though....I was seriously planning on liquidating and retiring.

The system is a mess. No simple fixes but let me know if I can help.

Appreciate your concerns and your time answering mine. Medicine is truly losing its glamour and becoming very onerous. I just want to see patients. I just got word too of an IRS audit. Add that to all the other stuff and I just say, “Why?” I’m truly getting so tired of fighting to be able to do what I love to do.

Jack

Mickey's Ends and Notes

GOVERNOR ANNOUNCES ASSISTANCE WEBSITE FOR PEOPLE IN NEED

Governor Jennifer Granholm recently announced a streamlined state website that will help the unemployed and other Michigan residents easily find programs that may assist them. The Helping Hand website, www.michigan.gov/helpinghand, offers information on jobs and training, unemployment benefits, health care, family support, and housing. People who are applying for food assistance will now be able to apply online through Helping Hand and will not have to visit a Department of Human Services Office. The website can also help people determine if they may be eligible for unemployment benefits or certain types of public assistance, such as Medicaid benefits.

While Helping Hand covers many programs and services, it doesn't include every available resource in every Michigan community. So the state is partnering with the Michigan Association of United Ways by providing links on Helping Hand to 2-1-1, the United Way system (<http://www.uwsem.org>) that connects people with information and resources. The state is also partnering with the Michigan Community Action Agency Association. For more information on the programs and services that the Macomb County Community Services Agency provides, visit <http://www.macombcountymi.gov/MCCSA/index.htm>.

DHS CREATES MI BRIDGES WEBSITE FOR FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Michigan Department of Human Services is continuing its focus on ensuring that residents receive the benefits they are eligible for. Through the implementation of the MI Bridges program (an online food assistance application and client self-service portal), families who are eligible or participating in the food assistance program can access their account via the Internet at the following link: <http://www.michigan.gov/mibridges>.

PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION ANNOUNCES ITS 'BE WINTERWISE' WEBSITE

With winter approaching, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC)'s website offers practical tips to residents on how to reduce their winter heating bills and provides information for how low income citizens can apply for financial assistance to avoid shut-offs.

The website also contains information on the Home Heating Credit and the Weatherization Assistance Program, and includes the Energy Assistance Directory, developed by the Coalition to Keep Michigan Warm, which provides a listing of public and private programs and resources by county. For more information, log on to the following link: (http://www.michigan.gov/documents/bewinterwise_138994_7.htm) or 1-800-292-9555.

In addition, the MPSC is also reminding senior citizens over the age of 65 to be aware that utilities must reconnect utility service to them free of charge with no questions asked during the heating season, which runs from November 1 through March 31. Customers are urged to contact their utilities directly if they are having difficulty paying their electric or natural gas bill, or are currently disconnected.

MICHIGAN GEARS UP FOR 2010 CENSUS

U.S. Deputy Secretary of Commerce Dennis F. Hightower and Lieutenant Governor John D. Cherry, Jr. recently kicked off Michigan's 2010 census campaign, "It's in Our Hands, Michigan." Cherry was named Michigan's complete count chair earlier this year to oversee the state's census

efforts. Michigan is working with state agencies to promote the census through communications they have with local communities and constituencies.

Michigan also has a unique problem in that it has more snowbirds than many other states, with an average of 2.1 percent of Michigan's residents identified as part-year residents. Most of Michigan's part-year residents have their permanent homes in Michigan and spend the smaller part of the year in another state, such as Florida or Arizona, which means they need to be counted in Michigan.

Quick facts regarding the 2010 Michigan Census:

- In Michigan, for every person NOT counted, our state loses \$10,000 (\$40,000 for a family of four) to other states over the course of 10 years.
- The census also determines reapportionment and redistricting of congressional, state and local representation.
- It is estimated that 24,000 people will be hired at a pay range of \$11.25-\$19.50 per hour.
- Michigan would not have lost a congressional seat after the 2000 census if its snowbirds had been counted in the right place.
- Because so many of Michigan's snowbirds were counted in the wrong place by the 2000 census, roughly \$200 million of federal funds are spent in other states each year instead of in Michigan, which adds up to \$2 billion over the course of a decade.

For more information on the 2010 Michigan census, please visit www.michigan.gov/census2010.

MDOT TO HOST PUBLIC MEETING REGARDING 2010 RECONSTRUCTION OF I-696/I-94 INTERCHANGE ON NOVEMBER 24

The Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) will be holding a public meeting to discuss the upcoming reconstruction of the I-696/I-94 interchange near the Roseville/St. Clair Shores border. The public will be able to view the project's details and have their questions and concerns answered by MDOT and consulting staff. The project is expected to begin next summer and be completed in late 2010.

The meeting will take place on Tuesday, November 24, 2009 from 4-7:30 p.m. at Roseville City Hall, located at 29777 Gratiot. For special accommodations, please call (586) 445-5410.

Office Hours

*In response to requests from constituents, I have added office hours in Roseville and during the daytime. Here are my next scheduled coffee hours. Please feel to stop on by or make an appointment by calling my office.

November 30 7-8 p.m. Clinton-Macomb Public Library-South (35891 South Gratiot) Clinton Township	Future Office Hours T.B.A
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Mickey's TV Insider Show

Check out my TV Insider Show coming to a television station near you. Watch me interview local guests about politics, life, issues and concerns to our district.

Sterling Heights

Every Saturday and Sunday at 1 p.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Utica

Every Wednesday at 9 a.m.
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Clinton Township

Last week of every month- Sat thru Thurs
(Comcast Channel 5/WOW Channel 10)

Roseville

Various Times-check local listings
(Comcast Channel 18/WOW Channel 10)

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